

GROS VENTRE GAMBLING

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two enemy friends to strip the loser bare of everything he owned, down to his 572
very lodge, was, like a wheel game of the same order of magnitude, a crowning 525
event in Gros Ventre gambling, one arousing most intense popular interest. One
of our informants was, in view of this fact, of the opinion that gambling among
the Gros Ventre may have been first invented by enemy friends.

The keepers of the two most sacred pipes, the Flat Pipe and the Feathered 792 ●
Pipe, were not allowed to gamble with any one, nor were their wives, nor (prob- 525
ably: our chief informant was not sure) ex-keepers. Rare exceptions may have
occurred in practice. Should an enemy friend of a keeper taunt him into betting
and should the challenger lose, he would lose not only his wager but also in a
sense his life. For his life would in consequence be shortened, unless the keeper
took pity on him and through submitting him to the appropriate ritual pro-
cedure averted the penalty. It was believed too that the keeper could not lose
if, against the rules, he really did gamble. Gamblers, at least notorious ones,
were not selected as pipe keepers.

Keepers and their wives were subject to a great many other restrictions.
They had to maintain a high degree of dignity, to practise many kinds of
abstention and "asceticism," and to be benefactors to and intercessors for all 784
the people. It seems probably that the taboo on their gambling was related to
one or more of these aspects of the keepership.

Ritual "grandfathers" among the Gros Ventre were of two kinds. A retiring
sacred-pipe keeper became automatically "grandfather" to the incoming keeper
and instructed him in the ritual, prerogatives and duties of the keepership; a
candidate for a sacred lodge chose an older man who had been through the rite
as a ritual "grandfather" who would instruct him in the ceremonies and observ-
ances of the lodge in question. A person would never gamble against his ritual
grandfather. The relationship established between grandfather and grandchild
in both cases was predominantly a respectful and sacred one. Against his ritual
grandfather a man would not even play in the modern non-gambling 4-burton 524
hand game.

The foregoing rather intricate "bettor-wager" gambling pattern appears to 525
be the result of the orderly interplay of five chief determinants or conditioning 571
factors.

The most important and most basic determinant was that of in-group
altruism, cohesion, and loyalty, decreasing in intensity from closer and smaller
circle to more distant and larger circle, from biological family, to kinship group,
to band, to lodge and society, to tribe as such, to more or less friendly alien
tribe, and stopping short of hostile alien tribe. In general, the less intense the